

IN CONSIDERATION OF RESOLUTION NO. 24-5423, FOR THE PURPOSE OF
AUTHORIZING THE CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER TO ENTER INTO A GRANT
AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF OREGON FOR THE REGIONAL RAIL FUTURES
STUDY

Date: June 20, 2024

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Research

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Meeting Date: July 11, 2024

ISSUE STATEMENT

The State of Oregon allocated \$500,000 for Metro's Investment Areas Team to undertake a Regional Rail Futures Study. The proposed resolution will allow Metro to enter into a grant agreement with the State of Oregon to convey these funds to Metro.

The purpose of the Fund is to study the use of existing heavy freight rail assets in the greater Portland area for passenger rail alternatives to existing transportation modes.

The Fund will be reserved for the study. The study scope will be developed by Metro staff and a consultant with subject matter expertise in freight rail and passenger rail.

Staff will engage Council throughout the course of this study.

ACTION REQUESTED

Consider a resolution that allows Metro to receive a grant from the State of Oregon to fund the Regional Rail Futures Study.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

The RTP establishes a strong vision for transit to help the region meet its transportation goals and support local and regional outcomes that address equity, support the economy, improve safety and achieve climate benefits. However, there are still gaps due to implementation constraints illustrated by the fact that the Regional Transportation Plan constrained set of investments ensures that 8% of jobs are accessible by transit in 2045 when our goal is 37%. Reuse of existing freight rail lines is one solution that has already been leveraged in the region (e.g., WES, Council Creek) and this study would provide more information and definition of additional opportunities for future planning efforts.

POLICY QUESTION(S)

The study would assess community needs and readiness of existing freight rail corridors for passenger rail, considering barriers to and opportunities for upgrading and/or

converting existing freight rail assets for commuter and passenger rail use (particularly cost/benefit). The study may also look at supportive infrastructure, such as operations and maintenance facilities.

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

Metro's Investment Areas Team has the flexibility and expertise to manage a rail futures study for the region. Metro's regional approach and experience convening partner conversations will support this work in defining potential further investments to improve passenger rail transit to achieve local and regional goals in the greater Portland region.

The current State of Oregon grant is the only identified funding for the Regional Rail Futures Study.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends approving a resolution authorizing Metro to enter into a grant agreement with the State of Oregon in the amount of \$500,000 for the Regional Rail Futures Study.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

This study falls within the scope of the regional transit and corridor planning programs and provides budget to consider future opportunities for expanding the high capacity transit and/or intercity rail regional visions in the future. Transit provides an alternative to driving that is more climate-friendly and equitable to help us meet local and regional transportation and climate goals.

This study would provide insight into opportunities to use existing rail infrastructure to provide additional travel options for the region. With the help of consultants and input from partners, the study must be completed by December 2025. Information from the study, could build support for creative solutions for repurposing existing rail infrastructure such as at Council Creek where a vacated rail line could provide a future light rail extension and trail connection opportunity.

The funding for the Regional Rail Futures Study is included in FY25 Budget Amendments before the Metro Council for consideration.

BACKGROUND

This is the first time that the Regional Rail Futures Study grant has been before the City Council.

ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution 24-5423
- Exhibit A – Grant Agreement